United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council welcomes signing of Agreement on provisional cease-fire by Tajik Government and opposition.

+ NATO aircraft hit Bosnian Serb tank in Sarajevo exclusion zone after several attacks on UNPROFOR peace-keepers.

+ General Committee recommends 158-item agenda for forty-ninth session of General Assembly.

+ Secretary-General receives President of Ireland at Headquarters; expresses confidence regarding prospects for peace in Northern Ireland.

+ Advance team of 12 UNMIH military observers to leave New York for Haiti tomorrow; Department of Humanitarian Affairs team to arrive in country on Saturday.

+ United States provides five-member team to investigate serious violations of international humanitarian law in Rwanda.

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The Security Council today welcomed the Agreement on a provisional cease-fire signed by the Government of Tajikistan and the Tajik opposition in Tehran on 17 September. The agreement was concluded through the good offices of Special Envoy Ramiro Piriz-Ballon, and with the assistance of Iran, the Russian Federation and other countries acting as observers at the inter-Tajik talks. The parties agreed to a provisional cessation of hostilities on the Tajik-Afghan border and inside Tajikistan, assisted by United Nations military observers.

In a statement read out by its President, Juan Antonio Yanez-Barnuevo (Spain), the Council emphasized the need for the parties to meet their obligations under the Agreement, including strict observance of the cease-fire. It expressed the hope that the third round of inter-Tajik talks in Islamabad would further consolidate progress towards a political settlement. The Council reaffirmed its full support for the efforts of the

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Secretary-General and his Special Envoy to promote political dialogue between the parties. It also noted the request of the parties for United Nations support for the Agreement, and invited the Secretary-General to urgently present his views and recommendations regarding that request.

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North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) aircraft this afternoon destroyed a Bosnian Serb tank within the Sarajevo heavy-weapons exclusion zone after United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) peace-keepers were fired on several times earlier in the day. The Bosnian Serbs had been warned that NATO air power would be used as a result of the deliberate attacks on UNPROFOR and continuing violations of the exclusion zone.

The first attack on peace-keepers took place this morning in downtown Sarajevo, when one round was fired at a French anti-sniper team. A French armoured personnel carrier subsequently came under fire at the Bratstva Bridge. Bosnian Serb forces later fired a rocket-propelled grenade at a French armoured car, seriously wounding the driver.

The UNPROFOR Commander in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lieutenant-General Michael Rose, warned that all future attacks on UNPROFOR peace-keepers would be met with the appropriate and proportional use of military force.

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The General Committee has recommended that the forty-ninth General Assembly adopt an agenda consisting of 158 items. It recommended that the following new items be considered directly in plenary session: the report of the International Tribunal on serious violations of international humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia; commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War; and observer status for the South Pacific Forum in the General Assembly.

The Committee did not recommend that the Assembly take up a proposed new item entitled "Consideration of the exceptional situation of the Republic of China in Taiwan in the international context, based on the principle of universality and in accordance with the established model of parallel representation of divided countries at the United Nations." The Committee recommended that an item on the situation in the occupied territories of Croatia be allocated to the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization), and that the question of criteria for the granting of observer status in the Assembly be allocated to the Sixth Committee (Legal).

The provisional agenda, as well as the Committee's recommendations for the allocation of items among the Assembly and its Main Committees, will go before the Assembly tomorrow.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today received the President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, at Headquarters. President Robinson informed him about her forthcoming visit to East Africa, including Rwanda, and they discussed the situation in that country. The Secretary-General thanked her for Ireland's continuing support for United Nations peace-keeping operations, and expressed confidence that recent developments in Northern Ireland would lead to peace there.

President Robinson was later scheduled to deliver a closing statement at the Department of Public Information's forty-seventh annual conference for non-governmental organizations. The theme for the conference was "We the Peoples: Building Peace."

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An advance team of 12 military observers for the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) was briefed today at Headquarters prior to its departure for Port-au-Prince tomorrow. The team will observe the operations of the multinational force in Haiti and report on implementation of Security Council resolution 940 (1994). It consists of four military observers from Bangladesh, two from France, two from Ireland and four from New Zealand, and will be joined next week by two observers from Argentina and two from Guatemala.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Haiti, Ross Mountain, reported problems of access in parts of the country. However, he expressed hope that the situation would improve very quickly. Senior United Nations and United States officials met today to discuss the question of coordinating and expanding humanitarian efforts. In a related development, a team from the Department of Humanitarian Affairs will arrive in Haiti on Saturday.

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A five-member investigative team has arrived in Rwanda to gather evidence of violations of international humanitarian law, including genocide, committed since April. The United States provided the team in response to the announcement by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala Lasso, of a $10.5 million plan to expand operations there. The team, which includes investigators and legal experts, is led by Stephen Mansfield from the United States Attorney's Office in Los Angeles.

The investigative team will work within the framework of the human rights field operation in Rwanda. Under the authority of the High Commissioner, it will interview witnesses and gather documentary and other evidence of grave violations of international humanitarian law.

The arrival of the team brings to 25 the number of human rights field officers currently working out of the Human Rights Field Office in Kigali. Several Member States, including Finland, Germany and Spain, have indicated that they will send experts to Rwanda shortly.

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